

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A configurable billing system for a machine, the machine operative to output a product or service and including a plurality of aspect sensors, the sensors operative detect the delivery of aspects of the product or service and to report the delivery to the billing system, the billing system comprising:

a coded billing strategy defined for the machine; and

a plurality of meters updated by the billing system for recording the delivery of the aspects of the product or service based on the billing strategy whereby the billing system tallies the aspects in a predefined manner.

2. The configurable billing system of claim 1 wherein the coded billing strategy comprises a list of aspects of interest.

3. The configurable billing system of claim 1 wherein the coded billing strategy comprises a list of meters.

4. The configurable billing system of claim 3 wherein the coded billing strategy comprises information associated with the listed meters, the information describing the function of the meters.

5. The configurable billing system of claim 1 wherein the coded billing strategy comprises information representing a set of functions describing the operation of a set of meters.

6. A configurable billing system for an document processing system, the document processing system operative to produce documents and including a plurality of

aspect sensors operative to detect document production events and to report the aspects of the document production to the billing system, the billing system comprising:

- a billing strategy description accessible by the billing system;
- a plurality of meters defined in the billing strategy; and
- a billing module operative to update the plurality of meters according to the billing strategy.

7. The configurable billing system of claim 6 wherein the billing strategy description comprises a list of aspects of interest.

8. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises an impression count.

9. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises an impression event flag.

10. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises set count.

11. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises a set completion flag.

12. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises a diagnostic impression flag.

13. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises a media descriptor.

14. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises a highlight color flag.

15. The configurable billing system of claim 7 wherein the list of aspects of interest comprises a full color flag.

16. A document processing system comprising:
a print engine;
a configurable billing system operative to follow a billing strategy and to record the occurrence of document production events described in the billing strategy;
5 a marker module operative to control the print engine in the production of documents, and to report document production events to the billing system.

17. The document processing system of claim 16 wherein the marker module is operative to deliver the billing strategy to the billing system.

18. The document processing system of claim 16 wherein the print engine further comprises a xerographic printer.

19. A method for developing and using a universal billing module, the method comprising:
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predefining a billing strategy, the billing strategy including a list of parameters with implicit or explicit communication mechanisms and data parsing information, and process algorithm information; and

storing the billing strategy in a machine-readable form.

10 reading the stored billing strategy;

instantiating meter data structures as directed by the read billing strategy;

monitoring a document processing procedure as directed by the read billing strategy; and

updating the meter data structures as directed by the read billing strategy.